



# THE TALKING PIECE

## Crowd-sourcing, restorative justice style

By Jennifer Larson Sawin

Recently, National Public Radio aired a piece on “crowd-sourcing”—have you heard the term? It describes how organizations harness the talent, wisdom, and wit of volunteers to tackle seemingly impossible tasks. For example, a small research group asked volunteers all over the world to scan aerial pictures of thousands of square miles to find the long-sought burial grounds of Genghis Khan.

So what do crowd-sourcing and Genghis Khan have to do with C4RJ? For 11 years, we’ve asked you, your neighbors, friends, and family to help us achieve the impossible. Our modest operation relies upon your contributions to offer restorative justice to people affected by crime. Alongside nearly 100 volunteers and 12 police departments, you have crowd-sourced for a noble purpose.

In this newsletter, and in advance of our December annual appeal, you’ll find people who have helped us crowd-source. Steve Bloomfield and Melissa Apperson are long-committed donors. Nikki Spencer is a young volunteer and first-time 2011 donor. These three keep company with a mother who called me last month. She reminded me that her son was referred to us three years ago; the process was meaningful but at the time, she was unable to thank us with a donation due to financial straits. Now that she was on firmer footing, she wanted to offer a gift. These are the conversations that give us pause, and that remind us of the mighty crowd holding us aloft.

## C4RJ Welcomes New Partners



Chief Bongiorno

Three new police chiefs have joined C4RJ’s police partners, two of them in communities new to the program: Bedford and Stow. Chief Robert Bongiorno was appointed in July to head Bedford’s Police Department. Chief John Fisher became Carlisle’s chief in August. Chief William Bosworth took the lead in Stow in April.

Chief Bongiorno, though new to Bedford, is no stranger to restorative justice. He began his law enforcement career with the Concord Police Department, serving 1991–1996.

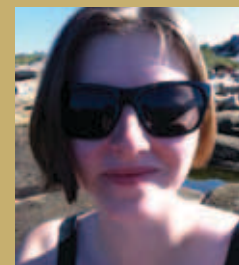
He then joined the Arlington Police Department and rose to the rank of captain, responsible for all uniformed personnel within the department.

“The traditional criminal justice system has failed to fully meet crime victim

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## INSPIRED GIVING Donor Profiles

**Nikki Spencer**  
Cambridge, MA



**Q: How did you learn about Communities for Restorative Justice?**

In 2003, C4RJ was just start-

ing up in Carlisle and I saw an ad in the *Mosquito* looking for volunteers. I was in high school and knew that some of my peers were making serious mistakes that would follow them for the rest of their lives. I liked that restorative justice asked people to take ownership of mistakes while giving them the opportunity to move forward in life. I signed up as a volunteer and I’ve taken part in some inspiring cases.

**Q: Why do you choose to invest in C4RJ?**

As a young professional, I don’t have a lot to invest, but I’ve seen what C4RJ can achieve with a little support. In recent years, C4RJ has grown rapidly. It has continually evaluated, refined, and adapted its practices while expanding into other communities. Finally, I’ve watched the organization professionalize while keeping in touch with its grassroots origins.

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## Donor Profiles *continued from page 1*

Even though I can only make small donations at this point, I know I don't need to give much to keep this momentum going.

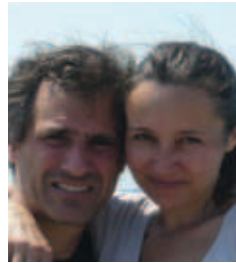
### **Q: In what ways do you see your community benefiting?**

I've seen offenders turn their lives around and embrace the idea of being part of a community. I've grown up at the same time as many of the youth I've worked with on cases, and I know that many of the things they've learned at C4RJ about decision-making and responsibility have stuck. Now that I live in Cambridge and work in Boston, I'm excited that C4RJ is garnering interest from urban towns. I can't wait to take part in a case in my new community!

### **Q: What would you tell a friend about C4RJ?**

This model works, and we should do everything to help it expand, whether that means volunteering, donating, or simply spreading the word. At the very least, I've "liked" C4RJ on Facebook and you should too!

### **Steven B. Bloomfield and Melissa Apperson Concord, MA**



### **Q: How did you learn about Communities for Restorative Justice?**

Some years ago, through seminars on peace

and reconciliation at Harvard University, we learned about Prof. Carolyn Boyes-Watson and her Center for Restorative Justice at Suffolk University. Around that time, we learned that C4RJ was growing in our midst. Then we met the late Dick Nethercutt.\* His struggle after a heinous crime—and how that process spurred his restorative capacities—moved us and challenged our assumptions about justice. Later, we learned of a restorative justice case in Concord where youth met the shop owners whose properties they had defaced. We were especially impressed that Concord police committed their moral and legal authority to the cause.

\* Richard "Dick" Nethercutt was a long-time advocate for restorative justice and a dear friend to C4RJ. His daughter, Jaina, was raped and murdered in Seattle in 1978. Years later, Dick participated in a restorative dialogue with a proxy offender which brought profound healing for both of them. Mr. Nethercutt passed away in 2009.

### **Q: Why do you invest in C4RJ?**

Very simply, we have found the restorative idea to be creative, generative, and inspiring. We also understand that small amounts can support big endeavors. We wanted to add our voices to a humane, community-based movement.

### **Q: In what ways do you see your community benefiting?**

Reckoning correctly with wrongdoing requires thoughtful reflection. The options of apology and restoration must all be part of a community's array of solutions to difficult problems. A community without restorative justice is a community ill served to meet the fullness of its challenges. The region is far more civilized for C4RJ's presence.

### **Q: What would you tell a friend about C4RJ?**

C4RJ promotes civic virtue by establishing wise and just practices that are both deeply rooted and visionary. The organization is a laboratory for the exercise of courage.

## Remembering Albrecht "Brec" Saalfield C4RJ Friend and Board Member

On September 16th, we sadly marked the passing of a dear friend. Brec was a Concord resident, a stalwart advocate for restorative justice, and had been active in C4RJ's genesis in 2000. His experience as a family law attorney, teacher, coach, and principal informed his passion for this work. He pricked upon hearing jokes of ne'er-do-well lawyers; he saw himself in a "helping profession."

While on our board (2009–2011), Brec encouraged us to draft restorative justice legislation with the support of Sen. Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton). He also pushed us to demonstrate the cost savings that restorative justice offers the criminal justice system. Thanks to the support of the Sudbury Foundation, C4RJ is partnering with McCormack Graduate

School of Policy and Global Studies at UMass-Boston on this research. Both of these endeavors will better position us for municipal, state, and federal support in the future.

As a member of C4RJ's Development Committee, Brec modeled how far a simple, meaningful request for support can go. He regularly spoke about his own passion for restorative justice among his friends. Before and after Brec's passing, we have received many gifts in his name.

We extend our sympathies to his wife Melissa and the family; we commit to honoring him in our work.



## New Partners *continued from page 1*



Chief Fisher



Chief Bosworth

needs. The Bedford Police Department in partnership with the community sees restorative justice as a way to address victim needs and treat offenders in a new way," Bongiorno said in announcing his intent to work with C4RJ.

Chief Fisher comes to Carlisle from Nashua, NH, where he served for 22 years, most recently at the rank of captain. He engaged in several areas of police work in Nashua, including the Professional Standards Division. Fisher is an avid rugby player and cyclist. He has taught courses in police management and criminal justice at Roger Williams University and Rivier College. Fisher has also worked extensively with youth as

a basketball coach and has volunteered for six years speaking to high school students about safe driving.

Chief Bosworth has been with the Stow Police Department for 27 years. He has served as the Department's Domestic Violence Advocate/Liaison with the Domestic Violence Service Network.

### "Restorative justice is a way to address victim needs and treat offenders in a new way."

"As chief, I wanted to get involved with C4RJ to enhance our dealings with the community. We want to be able to give people who have made a mistake a second chance to make right on their wrong, and to be able to give the victim a say in the process of dealing with a person who wronged them," said Bosworth.

We look forward to working with these chiefs, their departments, and the communities they serve.

## How you can help

We love sharing our work with you through *The Talking Piece*, e-blasts, and newspapers. C4RJ now serves 12 regional communities, and referrals keep growing. Your support helps us meet the needs of those affected by crime. You might also consider providing:

- A new (or gently used) laptop for mobile case-related use
- Frequent flyer miles for staff conferences
- Sponsorship of *The Talking Piece* quarterly newsletter
- Support costs for a guest speaker
- Financial support to fund a qualitative longitudinal study
- A new (or gently used) laser printer to improve office network
- Earmarked support to victims and offenders who need counseling or other services

Let us know how you would like to help. Visit our website at [www.c4rj.com/giving.php](http://www.c4rj.com/giving.php) or contact Executive Director Jennifer Larson Sawin at 978.318.3447 or [jlarsonsawin@c4rj.com](mailto:jlarsonsawin@c4rj.com).

## Facts and Figures: 2011 at a Glance

Where does the support go? Here's a recap of 2011 thus far. With a few months to go in 2011, we know these numbers will rise.

### Individuals served – 115

- Offenders – 85
- Victims – 30

### Age of offenders – 13–56 years old

### Communities served<sup>1</sup> – 10

- Acton, Arlington, Ayer, Boxborough, Cambridge, Carlisle, Concord, Everett, Gilford (NH),<sup>2</sup> Littleton

### Community service hours to local charities – in excess of 300

- Many offenders agree to "build up" what was torn down with the crime committed. They serve at local food banks, councils on aging, faith centers, and area parks.

### Types of crimes referred

- Trespass
- Larceny (shoplifting)
- Breaking and entering
- Minor in possession of alcohol
- Possession of illegal drugs
- Vandalism
- Credit card fraud
- Malicious destruction of property

### Cases with reduced participation fee<sup>3</sup> – 10

### Volunteers trained – 60

- New volunteers – 20
- Experienced volunteers (workshops) – 40

1 The communities of Bedford and Stow joined C4RJ in recent weeks and we anticipate case referrals in this calendar year.  
2 The referral from Gilford was anomalous: the individual facing charges was a visitor from one of C4RJ's communities so the Gilford police referred the matter to us.  
3 C4RJ asks offenders to pay a participation fee of \$200 toward the cost of administering cases. This sum, although lower than our actual costs, is also far less than would-be court costs. It signifies a commitment to engage in the process. C4RJ offers a sliding-scale option for financial hardship. C4RJ also makes grant funds available to victims or offenders in need of counseling services that would otherwise be out of reach financially.





# COMMUNITIES FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE


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## INSIDE THIS FALL 2011 ISSUE:

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## About C4RJ

Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) is a community-police partnership that offers restorative justice to those affected by crime. Restorative justice recognizes that crime is a violation of people and relationships, not just a violation of law. Police refer cases to us. In the aftermath of wrongdoing, our "circle" process includes in the decision-making those affected by crime: victims, offenders, loved ones, supporters, community members, and law enforcement officials.

This newsletter, *The Talking Piece*, is named for an object (often a river stone) passed around the circle to engage individuals in the deliberations. The person holding the talking piece speaks while others listen. With this newsletter, we are passing the talking piece to you and would love to hear your views on our work. Contact us at [info@c4rj.com](mailto:info@c4rj.com) or by calling 978.318.3447 to relay your thoughts.

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